VISIT…

BAD LIGHT

A Short Adventure for Four 4th-Level Player Characters

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Bad Light is a short D&D adventure for four 4th-level player characters (PCs). Its design makes it easy to introduce into a game, and the villains' machinations are straightforward and easy for players to resolve.

The scenario is set on an ocean coastline near a trade route that's threatened by a reef, and the plot centers around a light-tower built against a cliff. Though the adventure requires all these elements to work, you can place it on any coastline in your campaign world, adding the reef and cliffs to whatever terrain is there normally. As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook,* the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* and the *Monster Manual*—to run this adventure. This scenario utilizes the D&D v.3.5 rules, but it can easily be adapted for use with the 3.0 rules as well.

To get started, print out the adventure, including the map. Read through the scenario at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Named for the mother-of-pearl scales that once covered its exterior, the Pearl Tower is an ancient navigational beacon built centuries ago to guide seagoing vessels around a dangerous reef. The reef lies just below the waves and is practically invisible from the surface, especially at night. By staying clear of the waters lit by the tower, trade captains can sail their ships safely around the reef rather than going miles out of their way to avoid it.

The narrow beach near the reef is cut off from the mainland by a long, tall cliff. The Pearl Tower was built against a near-vertical section of the cliff so that in addition to its primary function of guiding ships, it could provide easy access from the cliff top to the beach below.

Because the presence of the cliff makes fishing impractical and the land is too rocky for farming or ranching, no community has ever grown up around the Pearl Tower, and no lord is willing to invest in a garrison for its protection. The beacon has always been

maintained by poor commoners who receive a small stipend from various merchants' guilds for their service. Since the Pearl Tower has never contained anything of value and no one has ever lived in it, brigands have never bothered it.

Recently, however, a green hag named Lykast thought of a way to make money from the tower despite its lack of treasure. To that end, she forged an alliance with a barghest named Skrom, and the two used the goblin tribe he ruled to drive off the Pearl Tower's attendants. Once the tower was theirs, Lykast, Skrom, and all the goblins moved into it and made it their communal lair.

Lykast and Skrom then sent some of the goblins to build a false beacon on a section of the shoreline a few miles away. Now the Pearl Tower's beacon stays dark and unlit, and the false beacon burns brightly. Thus, the passing ships have begun turning toward shore far too early and foundering on the reef just in front of the Pearl Tower. The crews of the wrecked ships have thus far been no match for Lykast and the remainder of the goblin tribe. The green hag is also allied with a number of merrow, who buy the items of value that she takes from the ships for use as trade goods elsewhere.

So far, only a few ships have ended up on the reef, but the main trading season begins in only a few days. Word has reached the local merchants that the Pearl Tower's beacon can't be trusted, but the captains of foreign merchant ships don't have that information. If the situation isn't rectified soon, dozens of ships and hundreds of lives may be lost.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Lykast and Skrom are sitting pretty within the Pearl Tower, and they have no desire to move. But the two leaders have no love for one another, and each is trying to figure out how to do without the other. At this point, however, Lykast needs Skrom to control the goblin tribe, and Skrom needs Lykast to deal with the merrow (which don't appear in this adventure but remain a key component of the two villains' plans). The hag and the barghest plan to hire more guards (possibly merrow mercenaries) with the money they make from their joint venture and eventually turn the tower into a pirate haven. One good season's worth of wrecked ships should give them enough additional cash to hire a ship of their own and begin looting nearby towns and merchant vessels.

The characters can deal with this situation more than one way. The simplest tactic is to assault the tower from either above or below and clear out the monsters. A group that defeats either Lykast or Skrom ends the threat because the other foe can't keep the venture going alone and thus leaves after a day or two. (PCs shouldn't get experience points for villains that simply go away, however.) The characters can also make the area safe for passing ships by preventing the goblins from lighting the false beacon, though they must do so repeatedly if Skrom has not yet been defeated (see area 6 for details).

ADVENTURE HOOKS

As the DM, you must decide how to get the PCs to the light-tower. You can use the following hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to fit your campaign or the characters.

- The characters are aboard a boat that founders on the reef because its captain was misled by the false beacon.
- The PCs are hired by a town, merchant guild, ship's captain, or local lord to investigate the disappearance of a ship that is long overdue in a nearby port. Alternatively, the characters could be awaiting the arrival of an overdue ship that carries a visiting friend or some trade goods.
- The PCs simply come across either the false beacon and the goblins that tend it (see area 6) or the wreckage below the tower (see area 1).
- The characters go to the Pearl Tower to visit an old friend, only to find the place overrun with monsters.
- The PCs are caught out in a bad storm and forced to seek shelter in the tower they can see near the cliffs.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Bad Light is a site-based adventure in which the action occurs in and around the Pearl Tower. The adventure begins when the characters come within sight range of that structure.

The characters may approach the tower from the beach or from the top of the cliff. Use the encounter areas below in the order that the characters find them.

THE PEARL TOWER

Mother-of-pearl scales once covered the Pearl Tower's exterior, making it look as though it had been carved from a solid piece of pearl. But raiders made off with the scales long ago, and now the tower is nothing more than a simple stone structure carved from a single spur of rock. It has four interior levels, which were originally intended to house the caretakers, and the outer walls are solid stone. The few windows are shuttered with iron and barred from the inside. Except were noted otherwise, the doors are made of hewn oak and not locked. A spiral stairway connects the tower's four levels.

Iron Shutters: 2 in. thick, hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 30.

1. THE WRECKAGE (EL 4)

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the characters see the beach at the base of the Pearl Tower.

> The twisted and shattered remains of numerous ships lie scattered across a narrow strip of beach. Pieces of broken hull, torn beams, and other detritus drift just offshore, where a coral reef—obviously the source of the problem—is just barely visible beneath the waves. Crabs and other coastal scavengers pick through the wreckage, and waterlogged refuse of all sorts covers the sand. Thumps and creaks are audible as the waves push wood against wood, and the powerful odor of rot overwhelms the fresh scent of the ocean. Seagulls circle overhead, but not a single seabird lands near the destroyed vessels. From the largest of the remaining hulls comes the sound of scratching, and ripping, as though wet cloth were being torn apart.
>
> A square column of hewn stone, backed by a cliff, rises above the sorry scene. The column appears to be a square tower about four stories high. Its top is level with the top of the cliff. No mortar lines mark any brickwork in the structure—in fact, it looks as if it had in fact been carved from a single piece of stone. The only apertures visible are shuttered windows at varying heights and a wooden door set into a worn stone archway at ground level.

A dozen ships have already been led astray by the false beacon (see area 6), and their wreckage decorates the beach in front of the light-tower. Lykast (see area 3) descends on each newly wrecked ship and raids its shattered hull for both treasure (which she distributes among her minions after removing the choicest baubles for herself) and fresh meat, her favorite repast. Since Lykast has recently fed on the crew of a wrecked ship, she does not come down to investigate any new wrecks for a few days. Thus, if the PCs are shipwrecked, they have some time to explore the light-tower and its environs. Should they remain in the area but fail to take on the tower within three days, Lykast gathers four goblins from area 6 and attacks at dusk.

Creatures: Not all the sailors who died in the wrecked ships have lain peacefully in their unmarked, unhallowed graves—four of them have risen as ghouls. These creatures have taken shelter in the largest piece of wreckage, and they scuttle out at night to feed on human carcasses or, if they are hungry enough, on crabs. Since they are not lacedons, they cannot swim.

Ghouls (4): hp 12, 13, 14, 15; see *Monster Manual,* page 119.

Tactics: The ghouls stay hidden behind chests and beams while they are within the broken hull that serves as their shelter. Because they know the wreck so well, each gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Hide checks (even against characters with darkvision or low-light vision) made inside it. If possible, the ghouls wait for living targets to come within 30 feet before attacking so that they can open the fight with partial charges.

Development: The ghouls hunger for flesh, but they rarely manage to reach any fresh meat before Lykast does. Thus, they are unwilling to allow potential food to escape. The ghouls follow and harass any PCs they spot until they either catch one or are destroyed.

Treasure: Only a few valuables have escaped Lykast's raids on the wreckage. A DC 20 Search check of the hull where the ghouls live reveals a small chest containing 200 gp worth of diamond dust.

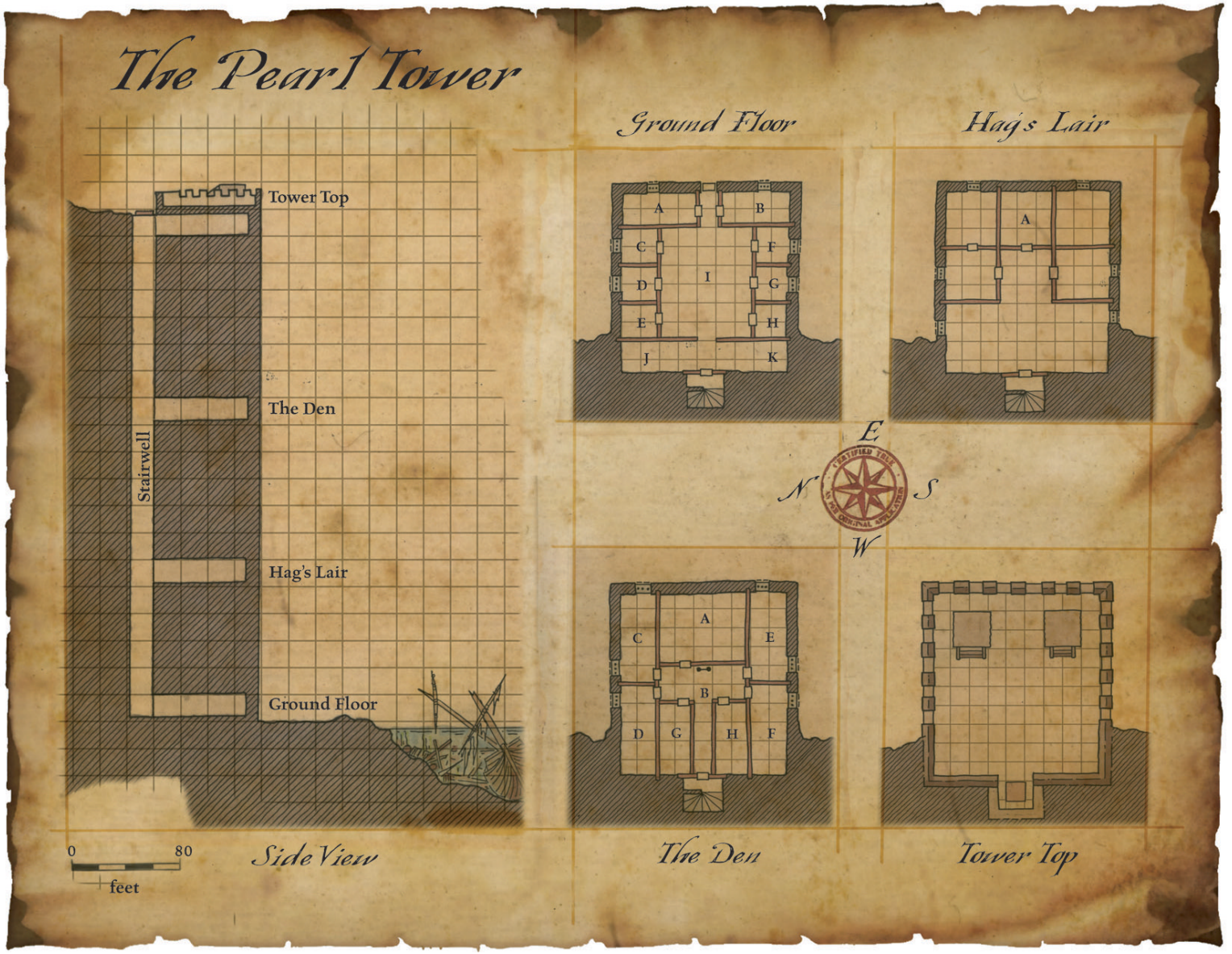
2. GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor of the tower consists of several chambers, all of which are in disrepair.

2a. Entry Door

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the characters approach the door to the ground floor from either the inside or the outside.

> The door is built of dark-colored wood and set into a stone archway. No windows or other apertures afford a view of what lies beyond it. The wood is reinforced with thick, metal-riveted straps, and its hinges are cunningly concealed from view. Deep scratches mar the wood and metal, but the door otherwise looks undamaged.


The Pearl Tower
Tower Top
The Den
Stairwell
Hag's Lair
Ground Floor
0
80
feet
Side View
Ground Floor
A
B
C
F
D
I
G
E
H
J
K
Hag's Lair
A
E
W
S
A
C
E
B
D
G
H
F
The Den
Tower Top

The iron-reinforced door is extremely well built and secured with a good lock. If the PCs smash it open, they alert the creature or creatures on the other side (either the grick inside the tower or the ghouls on the beach, depending on which way they go through the door). Lykast has the key to this door (see area 3).

Reinforced Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 25; break DC 24; Open Lock DC 30.

2b. Grick Lair (EL 3)

Though the entire ground floor is now a grick lair, these rooms once housed the tower attendants and their guests. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs first enter the ground floor.

> The damp, musty smell of a house long abandoned mingles with the tang of salt air. Thick piles of rotting clothes sit in corners of the cold stone halls, and the floor is covered with dried sand marred by strange drag marks. Broken bits of furniture are scattered across the floor and piled in corners, and a few old torches and rusty lanterns are mounted in wall sconces. The ragged remains of tapestries hang here and there on the walls, and plaster flakes from the ceiling.

A PC with the Track feat can make a DC 15 Survival check to identify the drag marks as the tracks of a Medium snakelike creature (the grick that Lykast keeps as a pet), but actually following them requires a DC 19 Survival check. Any character who does manage to track the grick finds it in a randomly determined room on this level and may surprise it. Otherwise, the creature picks up the characters' scent and slithers out to attack them 2d4 rounds after they enter.

Creature: Lykast keeps her pet grick on this level to prevent the goblins (see area 5) from sneaking down to the beach. The creature is tame enough not to attack her and to go to her if wounded, but it knows no tricks and doesn't really obey her orders.

Grick (1): 16 hp; see *Monster Manual,* page 139.

Tactics: The grick attacks and fights until dead. If the PCs leave it wounded, it goes to Lykast in area 3. She uses a single potion to heal it if she hasn't been in a fight yet.

Development: Once they have dealt with the grick, the characters are free to explore the ground floor of the tower. Little remains of the furnishings, but these chambers could be returned to functionality with proper restocking and repair. The original purposes of the individual chambers are noted on the table below.

Area	Purpose
1A	Storage
1B	Officer's ready room
1C–1H	Bedrooms
1I	Great hall and dining chamber
1J	Kitchen
1K	Pantry

Treasure: This level contains little of value, but the PCs can easily pick up ten torches (worth 1 cp each) and five hooded lanterns (worth 7 gp each), one of which has a pint of oil (worth 1 sp).

3. THE HAG'S LAIR (EL 5)

This floor was once a training complex for the troops that protected the Pearl Tower when it was first built. Lykast has now made it her lair, and no trace remains of its original purpose. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs reach the second level of the tower.

> The air on this floor is stale and heavy with the scent of rot. The ocean's roar can be heard in the distance, but no other sound is audible. The stone walls, ceiling, and floor were once covered in plasterwork and burnished wood, but the surfaces have long since faded and begun to peel.

The rooms on this level are empty except for Lykast's possessions (see below). Her door is the only one on this level that's closed, and she keeps it locked at all times.

Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 23; Open Lock DC 25.

Creature: Lykast is a horrid, bitter, greedy creature that enjoys inflicting pain and has no compassion or love in her soul. She trusts no one and doesn't expect to be trusted. Though cunning and deceptive, she is too impatient to think much beyond her own immediate benefit. Lykast wants money not to buy things of beauty or value, but just to sate her gold lust and allow her to inflict more pain.

The green hag is allied with Skrom but plans to deal with him only as long as she has to. Once she can do without him, she intends to kill him with help from her grick, since she knows the grick will prove useful for bypassing his damage reduction.

Unless she's short on food, or suspects a goblin of sneaking through her tower, or hears a ship crash on the reef, Lykast remains in her room (area 3A), plotting against Skrom.

Lykast: Female green hag; CR 5; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 9d8+9; hp 49; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.,

swim 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +9; Grp +13; Atk +13 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +13 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws); SA mimicry, spell-like abilities, weakness; SQ darkvision 90 ft., spell resistance 18; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +7, Hide +9, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Listen +11, Spot +11, Swim +12; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude.

Mimicry (Ex): Lykast can imitate the sounds of almost any animal found near her lair.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*dancing lights, disguise self, ghost sound* (DC 12), *invisibility, pass without trace, tongues, water breathing.* Caster level 9th.

Weakness (Su): Lykast can weaken a foe by making a special touch attack. The opponent must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or take 2d4 points of Strength damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Possessions: *Bracers of armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, 5 potions of cure light wounds,* jewelry (worth 300 gp), 3 keys (to her door, the door in area 2, and trapdoor in area 5).

Tactics: If Lykast hears foes approaching, she makes herself invisible. She then targets the weakest-looking, least-armored target with her first attack. If possible, she keeps attacking one foe until it drops, then moves on to whichever opponent has dealt her the most damage. Because of her spell resistance, she has little fear of spellcasters. She often chooses to take out ranged combatants first, then close to melee with the rest. She uses her weakness attack to reduce the Strength of any foe who seems particularly effective with a weapon.

If Lykast is reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, she flees. Her Concentration check to cast defensively is good enough (+11 with Combat Casting) that she can usually make herself invisible even if threatened—a tactic that greatly improves her chances of escape. Once she is out of immediate danger, she uses her *pass without trace* ability to hide her tracks.

Development: If Lykast isn't killed, she's likely to harass the PCs as long as they're in or near the tower. If injured, she uses her healing potions. She may use *invisibility* to ambush PCs later or *disguise self* to change her appearance to that of a stranded sailor. In the latter case, she sneaks ahead of the PCs and pretends to be a prisoner of either Skrom or her pet grick, depending on which way the PCs are going through the tower.

Once Lykast has been defeated, the PCs can explore her chamber. The room is furnished with a single chair, a rope cot, and a chest, and she keeps a few rotting human limbs on hand for food.

Treasure: The following items are stored in a chest in Lykast's lair: 480 gp, 1,200 sp, 3,600 cp, 10 malachite gems (worth 10 gp each), cloth of gold vestments (worth 60 gp). She leaves this treasure behind if she is forced to flee.

4. THE DEN (EL 4)

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the characters reach this level.

> The air on this floor is redolent with the odors of fur, old meat, and waste. Filth has been pushed aside into every corner and unused hall.

This floor once housed important staff for the tower, but Skrom has commandeered it for his own forces. The barghest has a nest in the largest back room of this floor (area 4A), and his troops sleep in all the other rooms.

Creatures: Skrom hates having to work with Lykast, but he needs her connections with the merrow in order to sell the goods taken from the wrecked ships. The barghest isn't likely to open negotiations with the PCs on his own, but if approached respectfully by a group that hasn't killed his goblins, he might well consider an alliance with them if they promise to fence his raided goods. In such an event, he might provide aid in slaying Lykast. Skrom insists on maintaining possession of the tower in any case, however.

Skrom (Barghest): 33 hp; see *Monster Manual,* page 22.

Tactics: Skrom's keen senses make it unlikely that the party can surprise him. If he hears intruders anywhere on this level, he assumes his wolf form and stalks out to attack. Skrom figures that any attackers are assassins sent by Lykast, and he would rather fight to the death than leave the tower to her. He attacks spellcasters first if possible, but he doesn't risk attacks of opportunity to do so.

Development: Any group that attacks Skrom must kill him to be rid of him. If his attackers flee, Skrom follows, tracking them as far as necessary to ensure their deaths. If no goblins have been killed (see areas 5 and 6), Skrom brings a dozen with him on any foray he makes in search of foes. If he is wounded, he waits until he has healed and his foes are camping, then tries to take them by surprise in the wilderness.

Once the PCs have dealt with Skrom, they can explore this level fully. Skrom's chamber is area 4A,

which was once the tower's library. Stone shelves still line the walls, but all the books and scrolls that once filled them are long since gone. Skrom has a pallet of grasses for sleeping and a single chest, but no other furnishings.

The other chambers are empty save for camping gear and refuse, though they could be returned to functionality with proper restocking and repair. The original purposes of the individual chambers are noted on the table below.

Area	Purpose
4A	Library (now Skrom's chamber)
4B	Trophy room
4C	Infirmary
4D	Chapel
4E	Meeting room
4F	Suite for visiting dignitaries
4G	Officer's chamber
4H	Priest's chamber

Treasure: Skrom has a *Heward's handy haversack* containing 250 gp and 10 pieces of obsidian worth 25 gp each.

5. TOWER TOP (EL 4)

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters come within sight of the tower's top.

> The top of the tower is even with the top of the cliff that rises behind it. A crenellated stone battlement surrounds the tower top on three sides, and the cliff face forms the fourth side. Two 5-foot high platforms, both blackened and soot-stained, stick up above the battlement. Each platform is accessible via a short staircase. Outside the tower, set in a niche in the cliff, is a trapdoor.
>
> A dozen small humanoids with sallow complexions, long arms, and drab clothing prowl around the tower top, evidently standing guard.

The tower was built for easy defense, and Skrom has taken advantage of its features.

Creatures: A dozen warrior goblins under Skrom's control always patrol the tower top. His tribe actually numbers 120 goblins, including 60 warriors, but the rest are currently hiding out in the nearby wilderness.

Goblins: 9, 9, 8, 7, 7, 6, 6, 5, 5, 4, 4, 3 hp; see *Monster Manual,* page 133.

Tactics: The goblins fight because they fear Skrom, not from any desire to guard the tower. When attacked, they beat on the trapdoor in hopes that Skrom will hear them (DC 20 Listen check for Skrom). If he does, he waits 5 minutes, then comes to see what's happened (see area 4). The goblins fight to the death to protect the tower top because they know Skrom will kill them if they fail to guard him.

Development: Any goblins that survive this encounter run into the tower to warn Skrom. If he is alive, he tries to hunt down the PCs (see area 4) and sends more goblins out to the bonfire within a day. If all of Skrom's warriors are killed, the rest of the goblins in his tribe flee. If Skrom is killed, the goblins dissolve their tribe and scatter.

Treasure: Each of the 12 goblins has 50 gp as a share of the tower's spoils.

6. THE BAD LIGHT (EL 4)

About 3 miles down the cliff from the Pearl Tower is the false beacon—a large bonfire. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the characters come close enough to see the fire and its protectors clearly.

> A huge bonfire burns next to the cliff edge, attended by a dozen or so goblins. These small, grubby creatures seem bored, and they make little effort to patrol or monitor their huge fire.

The fire is positioned just 5 feet from the cliff face to make it visible for a great distance at sea, and the goblins have cleared all foliage within 50 feet of it. They keep the bonfire going night and day, scavenging the surrounding area for fuel.

Creatures: The huge fire keeps away most predators, so the goblins here have become lax about security. They make no effort to secure or patrol their area; they simply gather fuel and ensure that the fire does not go out.

Goblins: 8, 8, 7, 7, 6, 6, 5, 5, 4, 4, 3, 2 hp; see *Monster Manual,* page 133.

Tactics: The goblins fight because they fear Skrom, not from any desire to guard the bonfire. Once more than half their number are dead, the remaining goblins flee.

Development: Any goblins that survive this encounter run to the tower to warn Skrom. If he is alive, he tries to hunt down the PCs (see area 4) and sends more goblins out to the bonfire within a day. If he is dead, the goblins dissolve their tribe and scatter.

Treasure: Each of the 12 goblins has 50 gp as a share of the tower's spoils.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

As noted earlier, defeating either Lykast or Skrom ends the threat because the two villains need each other to make their scheme pay. The PCs must also extinguish the false beacon at area 6 and relight the tower's beacon in order to make the area safe for shipping again.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

If you want to give the PCs a base of operations, the local peasants could ask them to become the new caretakers of the Pearl Tower. They could spend several game sessions dealing with creatures in the nearby wilderness, or a merchant guild might pay them to deal with threats farther away, supplying temporary caretakers for the tower in their absence.

If you wish to expand upon the hag's involvement with the scheme, Lykast could be part of a covey. If she dies, her sisters might then seek vengeance against her killers. The merrow with which Lykast dealt should also be upset about losing their trade partner, and they may try to take over the Pearl Tower themselves and reestablish the false beacon.

If Skrom survived, he might decide to track down the PCs at a later time. Realizing that they are powerful adversaries, however, he kills and eats foes until he becomes a greater barghest before confronting them again.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997 and moved to the Seattle area in 2000, after accepting a job as a Game Designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Fourteen months later, he returned to Oklahoma with his wife and three cats to pick up his freelance writer/developer career. He has author and coauthor credits on numerous *Star Wars* and *EverQuest* projects, as well as *Bastards and Bloodlines* from Green Ronin. He also has producer credits for various IDA products, including the Stand-Ins printable figures.